Schützenpanzerwagen in Action

m. S.P.W. Ausf. B (Sd.Kfz.251/1) 9.Pz.Div.

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ARMOR NUMBER 2
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Schützenpanzerwagen in Action

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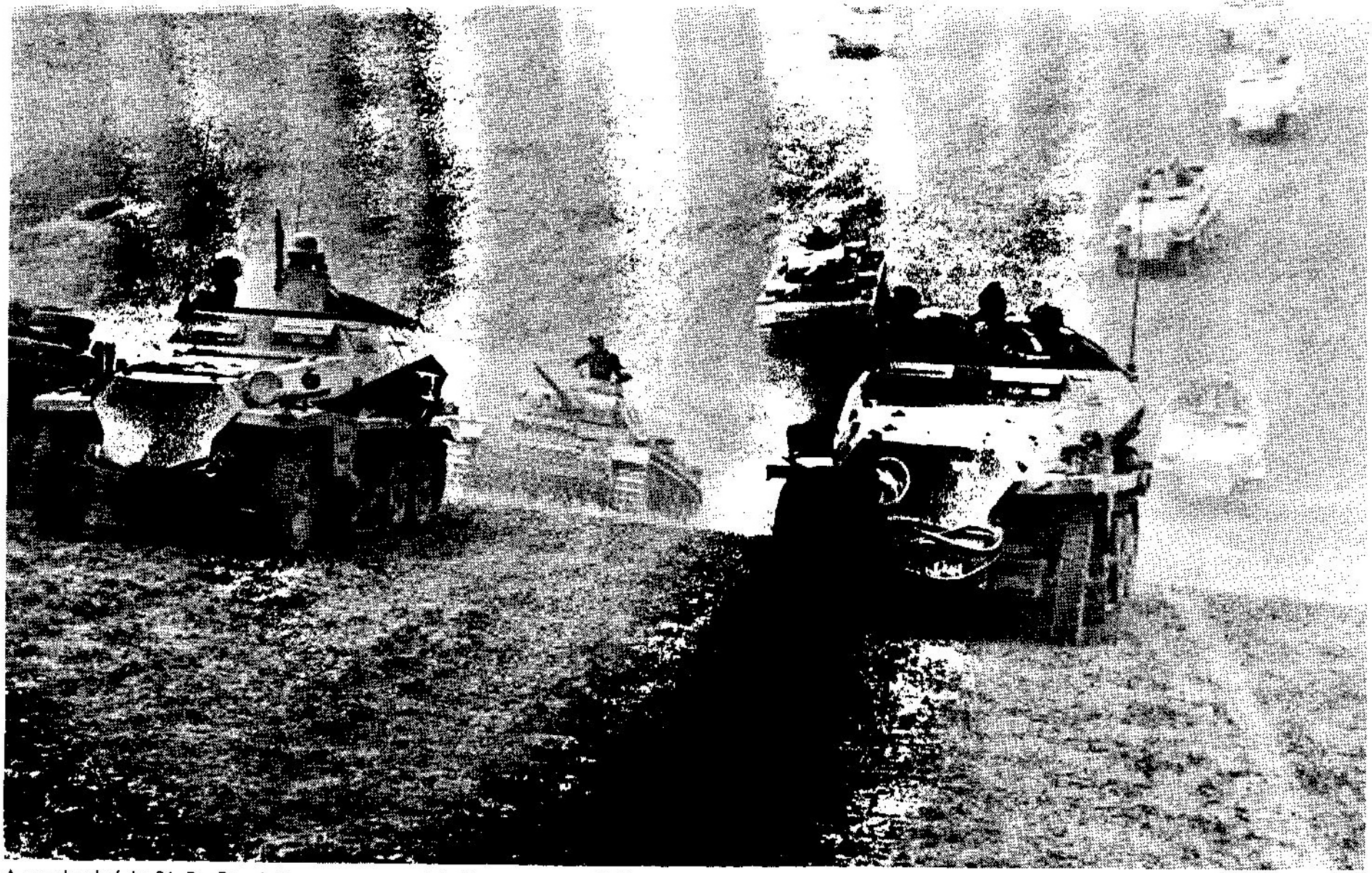

A spearhead of the 24. Pz. Div. during a counter-attack in Russia, summer, 1942.

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Development

Attempts to provide an armored vehicle capable of carrying men and their weapons into combat can be traced back to as early as 1918, when the British introduced the "Mark IX", a vehicle able to carry 54 men including a crew of four.

It was again left to the British to employ motorized infantry in combat and to prove the effectiveness of a combined force of AFV's closely supported by mobile infantry.

However, this successful campaign in Iraq in 1923, conducted under Lindsay, did little to alter the generally accepted French theory of the Twenties and early Thirties, that the tank is an infantry-support weapon and as such has to adjust his speed to the walking pace of the attacking troops.

The tank once again was placed in a secondary role as an infantry-support weapon. This doctrine applied during the First World War, proved to be sufficient then, however, it would prove fatal for the French and British in 1940.

Germany, coming out of the First World War defeated, and being on the receiving end of most of the armored attacks, developed a different attitude for this new weapon, the tank.

Without tanks of their own and with very few mechanized vehicles, the German Army of post World War I was a predominantly "horse and buggy" army, and any planning for a mechanized force could only result in theoretical essays on paper.

It was well known Generaloberst Heinz Guderian who emphasized in many articles and essays the importance of a mechanized infantry to fully exploit the usefulness of the tanks.

He envisioned a vehicle capable of cross-country-ability, as fast as the tanks themselves and so armored to ensure maximum protection for the crew against small infantry fire.

Only after years of determined effort and persuasion did the mechanized support-infantry concept succeed and find considerable support in Germany.

The standard 3 t half-track developed by Hansa-Lloyd-Goliath, later Borgward of Bremen, proved to be the most suitable chassis to carry an infantry squad (Gruppe) of ten men plus squad leader and driver, under sufficient armor protection into action.

The 3 t chassis received an armored super-structure of 12 mm front and 8 mm side armor. The prototype of a Gepanzerter Mannschafts-Transportwagen (armored-troop-carrier) **G.M.T.** appeared in 1938.

In spring of 1939, the first batch of these new vehicles, the **Ausführung A**, were issued to the 1st Panzer Division, stationed in Weimar.

The Polish Campaign proved the importance of an armored-troop-carrier, when a small number of these vehicles were employed by the 1st Panzer Division.

Early **M.T.W.** lacked the armored gun shield and the crews utilized sandbags for additional protection as well as to support the MG and rifles while fighting from within the vehicle.

The good experiences gained with these armored-personnel-carriers led to the forming of several fully armored "Schützenregimenter" (infantry regiments) with three battalions consisting of five companies each.

The armor protection of the **M.T.W.** was now upgraded to 14,5 mm, while the side and floor armor remained unchanged. Some of the early vehicles were partly bolted and welded, however beginning with **Ausf. G**, all superstructures were welded. The MG was now set into pivots behind armor-shields, while the platoon leader vehicles received a 3,7 cm Pak 38 anti-tank gun.

By now the former armored-troop-carrier had evolved into a potent fighting vehicle from which the infantry soldier fought and in which he lived and slept.

The "**Schützenpanzerwagen**" was born and with him the "Panzergrenadiers", officially designated with this name in July 1942, in appreciation for the valor the armored Infantry displayed in battle.

The "Panzergrenadiers", next to the army-engineers (Pioniere), had the highest casualties of any branch of the Wehrmacht in World War II and it is obvious that the losses would have been considerably higher without the **S.P.W.**

With the Panzer as a partner, the **S.P.W.** became a new classical weapon and despite its shortcomings, it became an example for the **A.P.C.** development of other nations. The armored personnel carrier concept is realized in the perfection of the new German "**Schützenpanzer Marder**". Fully tracked, this vehicle allows the troops maximum armor protection, fire-power from within the vehicle and cross-country-ability. A long way from the first British Mark IX of 1918, the **M.T.W.** of the thirites and the **S.P.W.** of the forties.

Leichter Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz.250)

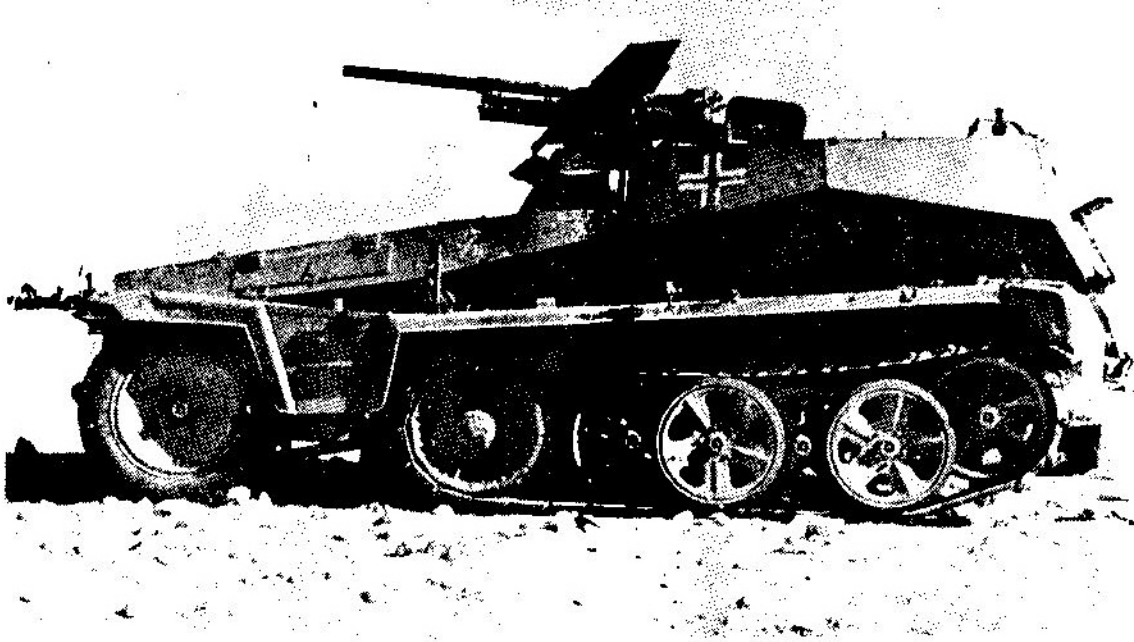
Leichter Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz.250/1) of the Division "Grossdeutschland" spear-heading an armor attack during the Russian Campaign. To achieve maximum range during the speedy advances of the early months of the War, 5 gallon jerry cans are stored outside the vehicles.

The early versions of the le. S.P.W. as well as the m.S.P.W. Ausf. A and B had no gun shield for their MG34. Note the cuffband on the right arm of the officer.

A le.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/11) mounting a 2,8 cm schwere Panzerbüchse 41.

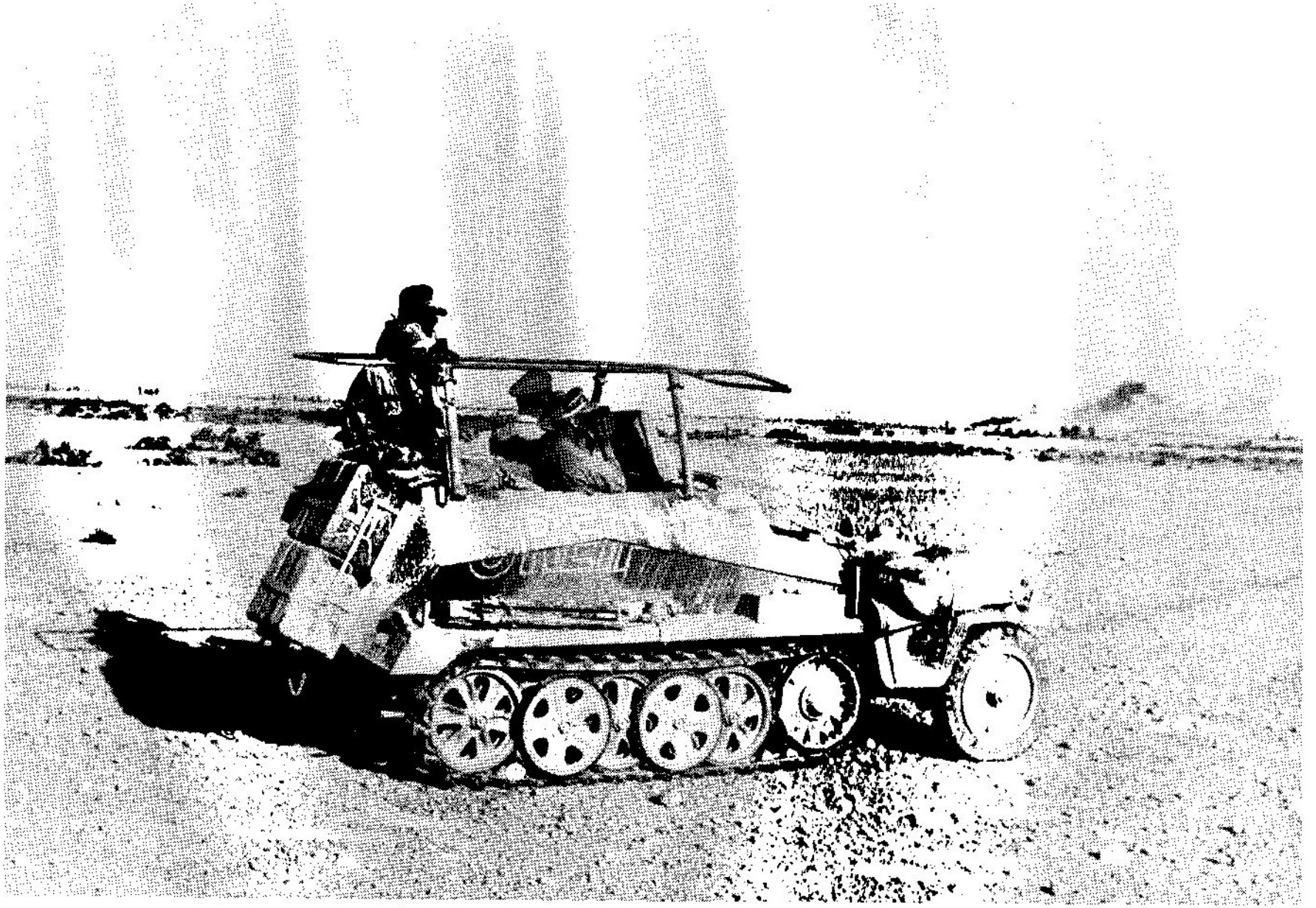
The 2,8 cm s. Pz.B was a 28/20 mm tapered-bore anti-tank gun. At the time of its introduction it was an excellent gun with a muzzle velocity of 4,600 f.p.sec. (1,402 m/sec) and could penetrate armor plates of 53 mm at a range of 400 yards, firing AP ammunition.

Armed with the 3,7 cm Pak 36L/45, this le.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/10) was abandoned in Lybia. The front springs of this vehicle appear to have broken, probably the reason for leaving the S.P.W. behind.

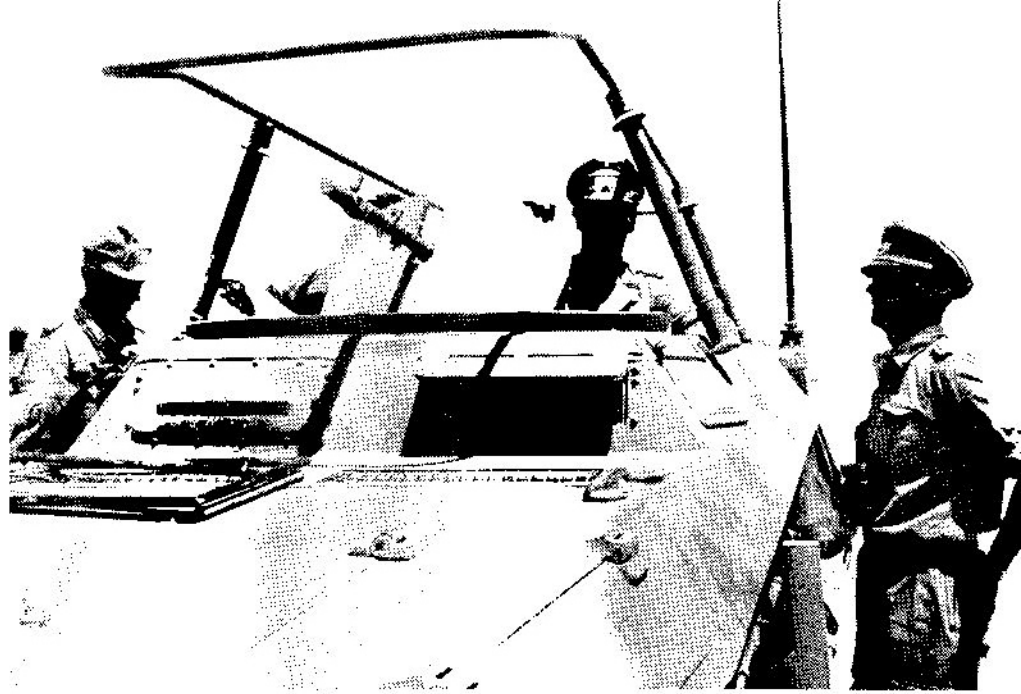


Right Below: A le.S.P.W. of the 16. Pz. Div. on the Eastern Front. The dark-gray vehicles are washed over with a white temporary paint. The insignia on the front plate indicates that the unit is the 4.Halbgruppe (half-platoon) of a A.P.C. Grenadier Unit.

The light A.P.C. was utilized throughout the Second World War as a radio communications vehicle. Here, a le.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/2) in support of a Pz.IV Ausf. H Unit.

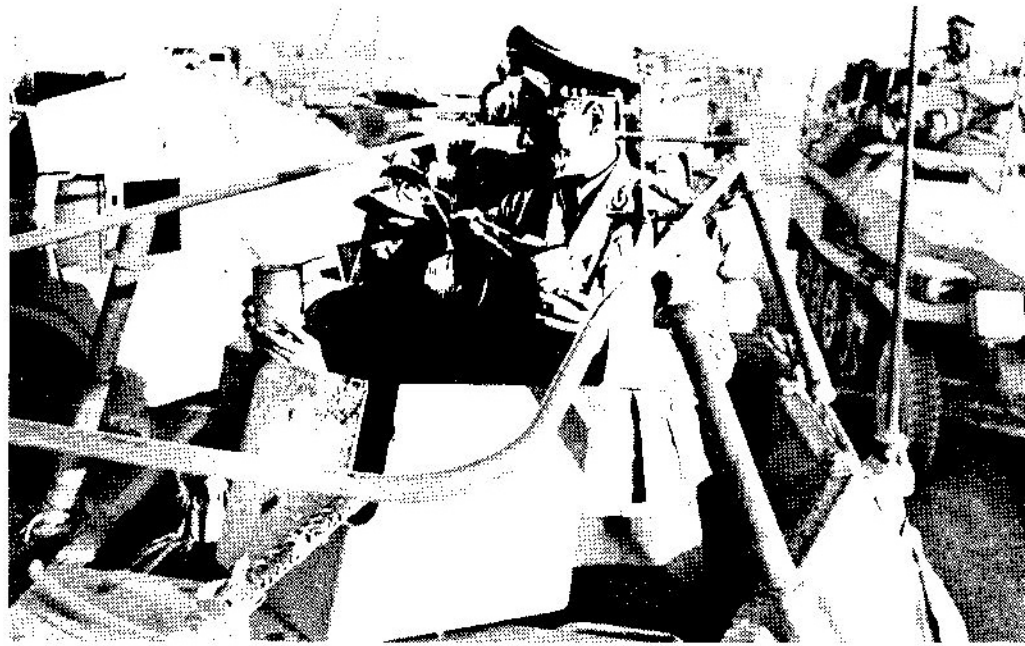


Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, Commanding General of the "Deutsche-Afrika-Korps" in his famous le.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/3) "*Greif*" (Griffin) during the Battle of Tobruk.



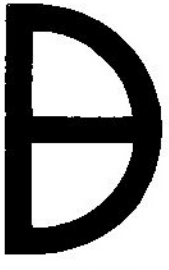
Various gear and equipment is stowed around the vehicle. A Luftwaffe officer on Rommel's staff enables a close cooperation between the Stukas and Panzers in this fast moving campaign.

Top Right: This close-up view of Rommel's le.S.P.W. shows the frame antenna, MG 34 and gun shield. *Note the two front-visors and the large hatches on top of the engine compartment, housing the six cylinder 100 PS Maybach engine.*

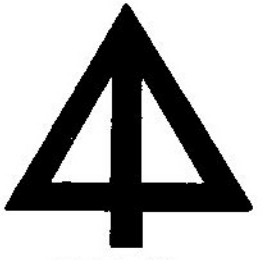


British trucks, quite frequently captured, are supplying the Afrika Korps with all the necessities so badly needed. General Rommel is refreshing himself with a can of peaches, a delicacy not found on the German soldier's menu.

The "leichte gepanzerte Munitions-Transportwagen" could transport 60 rounds of 7,5 cm StuK. L/48 ammunition, or 70 rounds for the 7,5 cm StuK. L/24. The le.gep.M.T.W. had a crew of two and a weight of 6,3 t. A single axle trailer (Sd.Ah. 32) was pulled carrying an additional 30 to 40 rounds.



21. Pz. Div.



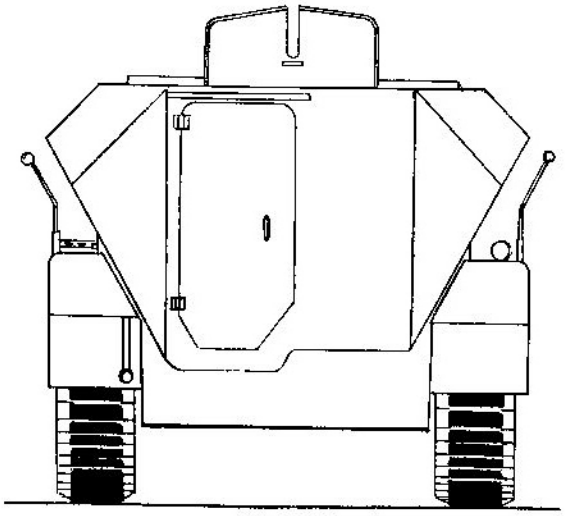
15. Pz. Div.

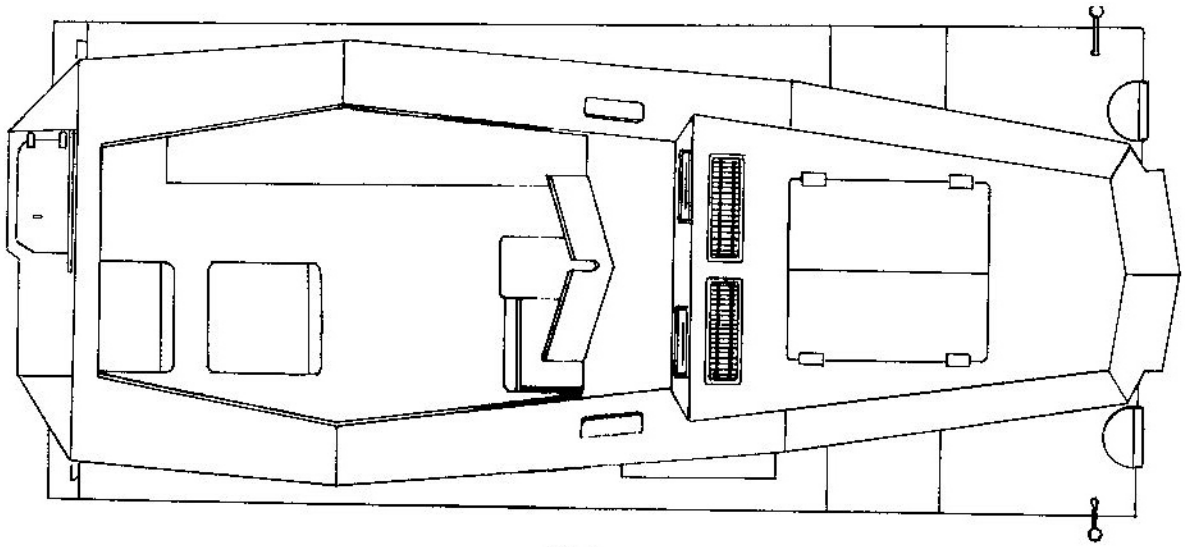
This leichte gepanzerte Beobachtungskraftwagen (Sd.Kfz.253) (armored scout car) is getting a special mud-camouflage treatment by a corporal who is trying to make his vehicle blend into the surrounding terrain.

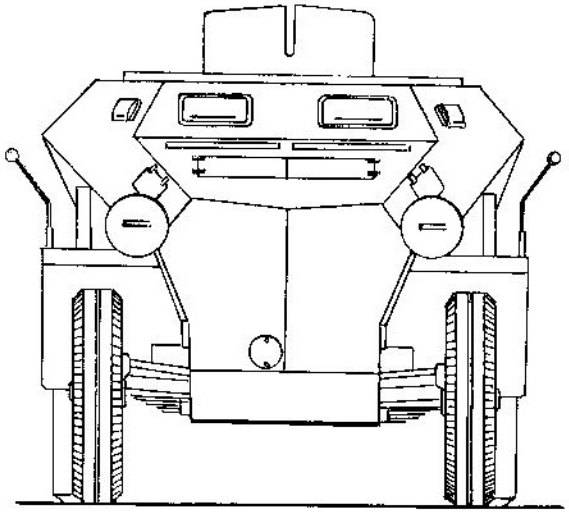
The crew of a shot down Ju 87 "Stuka" was fortunate enough to be picked up by advancing Panzer IV's. Now, from the safety of a le.S.P.W., they are observing their fellow Stuka men in action.

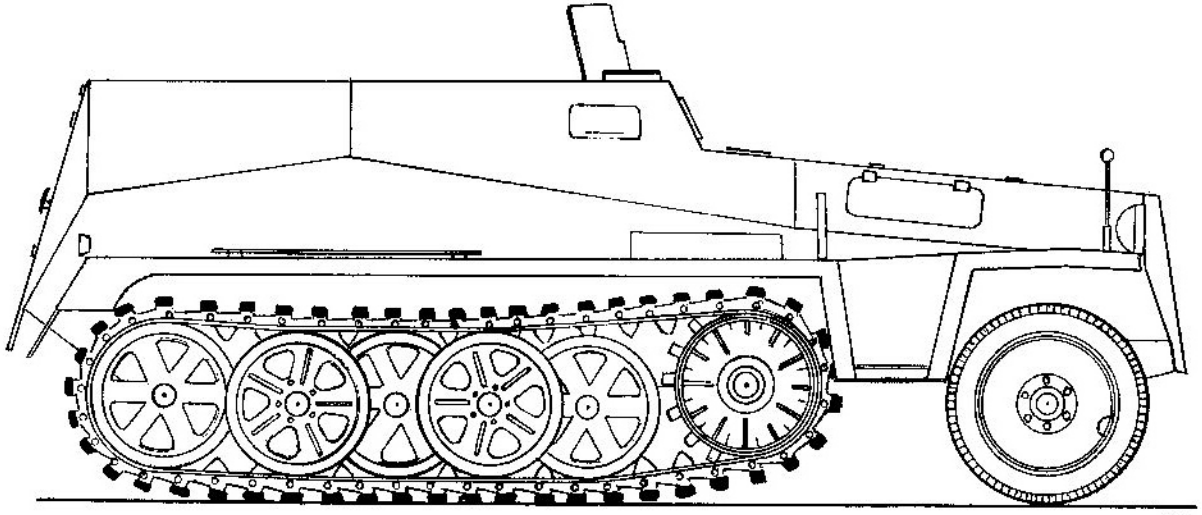
Beobachtungs and Funk S.P.W. of a Divisional Headquarter, somewhere on the **Eastern Front.**

Leichter Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz. 250/1)









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Mittlerer Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz.251)

General Guderian utilized a m.S.P.W. Ausf.B (Sd.Kfz.251/3) during the campaign in France, 1940.

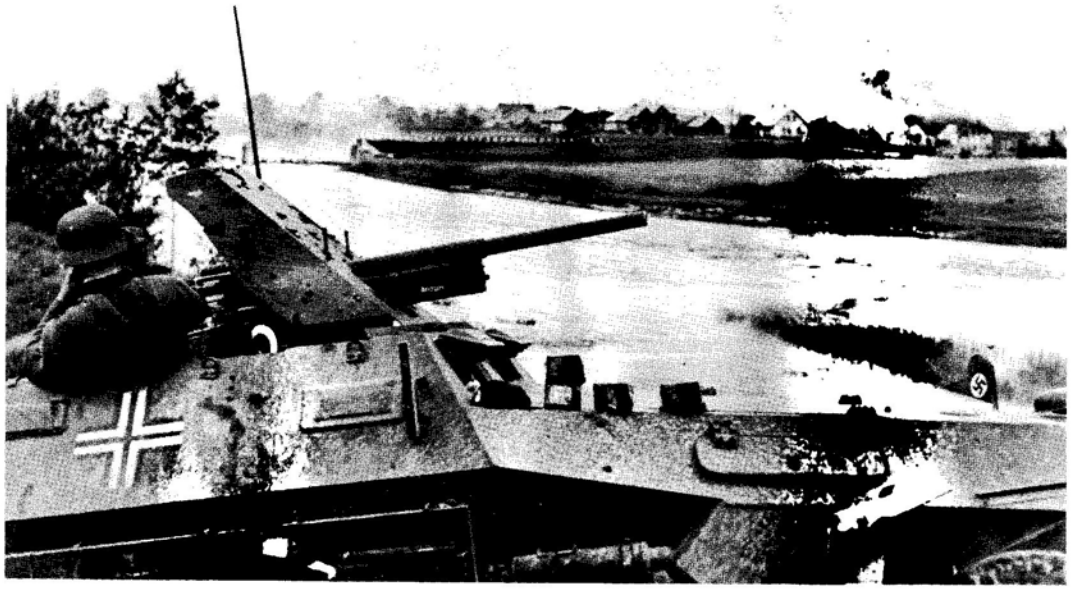
G

Three visors on each side as well as the open air intake above the radiator and the two piece front armor plate, are the major differences of the basic Types Ausführung A and B, compared to Ausf. G, which had a reinforced straight front armor plate and only one visor on each of the driving compartment sides.

The m.S.P.W. had a wading depth of two feet. In this picture, an Ausf. B command vehicle is negotiating a river during the advance in France, 1940.

The staff vehicle of a Panzer Division during the early days of the Russian Campaign. The S.P.W. had a large enclosed card table on top of the driving compartment and no fixed MG.

Platoon-leader S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/10).

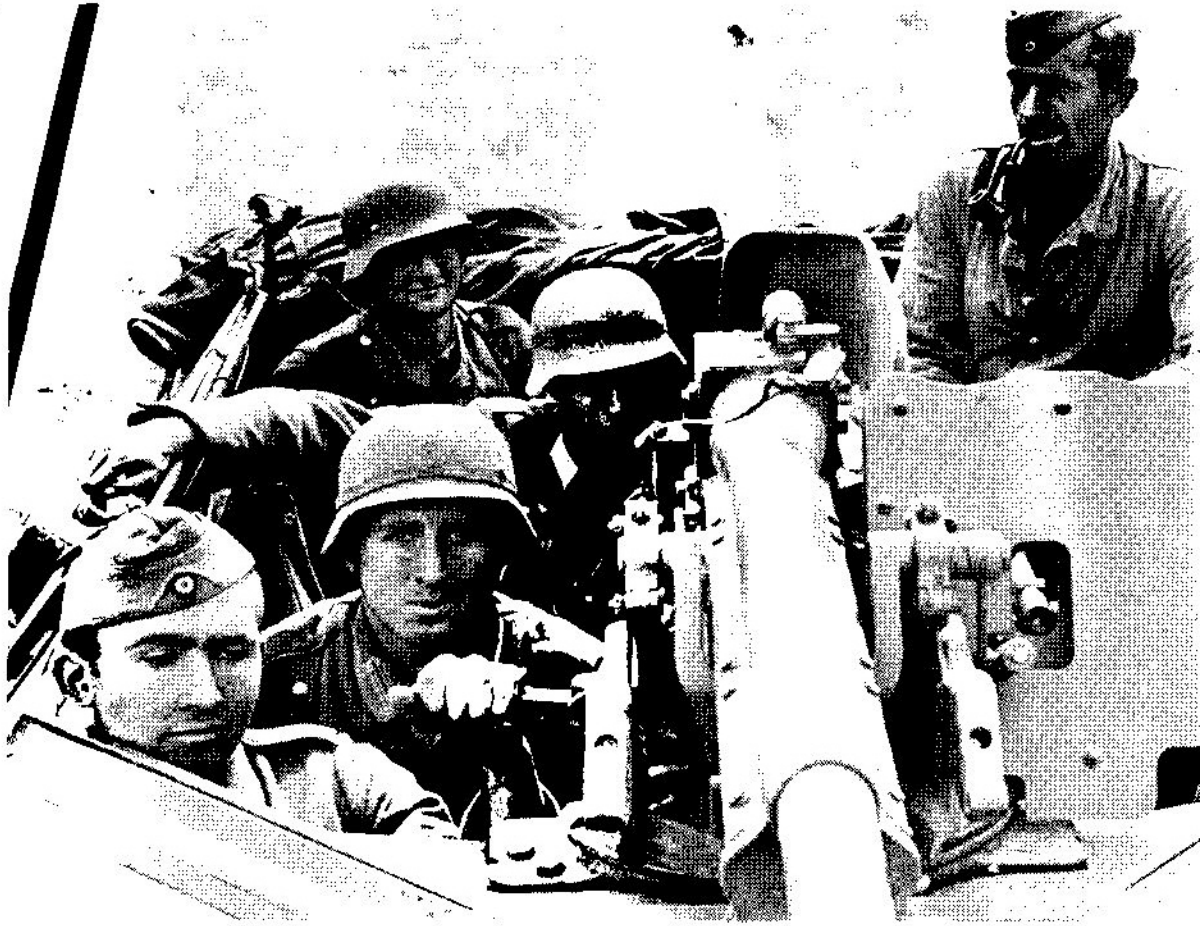


This unit, a S.P.W. Ausf. B (Sd.Kfz.251/10) is armed with a 3,7 cm Pak 36 L/45 anti-tank gun. This gun served as the standard German anti-tank weapon until it was replaced by the 5 cm Pak.

Below Left: Two types of gun shields could be found on the 3,7 cm Pak. In this photo, the lower gun shield, a close-up of the previous picture.

Every platoon leader's S.P.W. was equipped with a 3,7 cm Pak. The "Zugführerwagen" was issued in 1940 and served as a support vehicle until replaced by the 7,5 cm equipped Sd.Kfz. 251/9.

A gun shield was only installed on the gunner's side to protect the telescope sight.



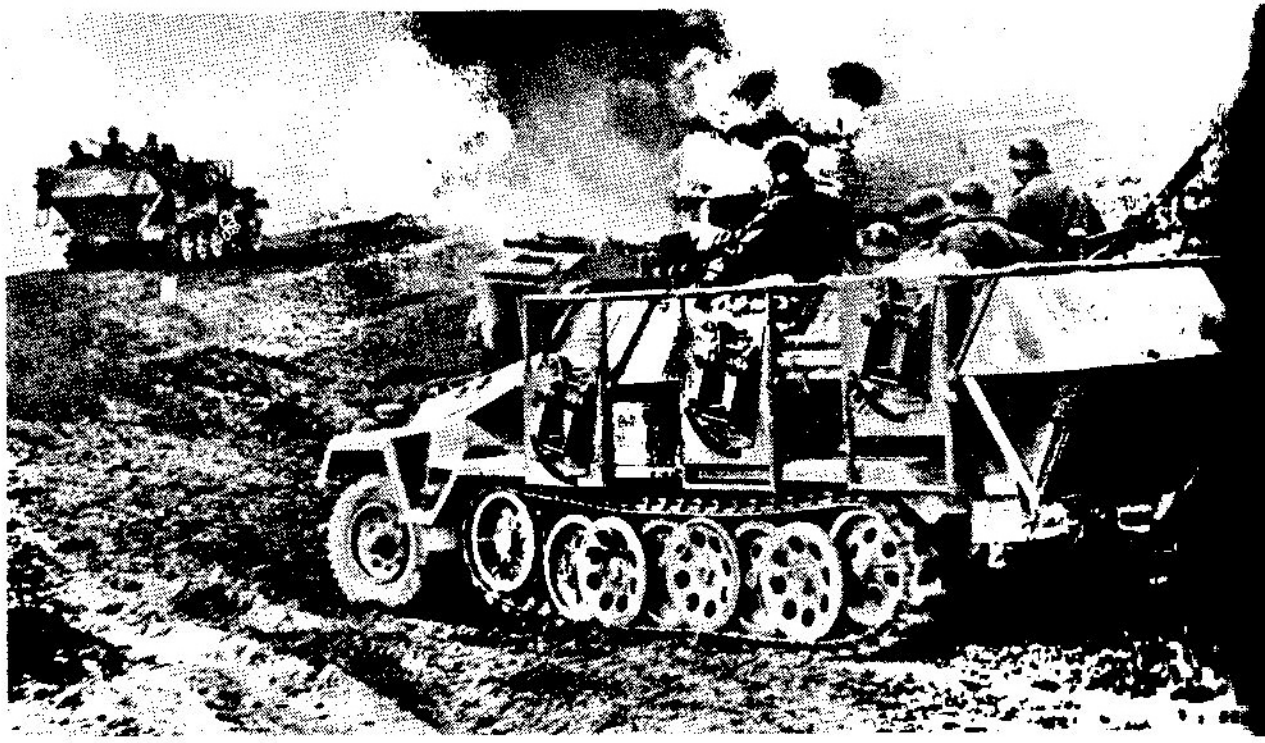
Division Grossdeutschland

"Panzergrenadiers" of the Panzer Division "Grossdeutschland" (white helmet on front armor plate) are going into action from a S.P.W. Ausf. C command vehicle.

General Hasso von Manteuffel, Commander of the 5. and 3. Panzer Army. General von Manteuffel is seen in this picture in his m.S.P.W. as commander of the Panzer Division "Grossdeutschland".

8. Panzer Division

S.P.W. Ausf. B of the 8. Panzer Division advancing into Yugoslavia, April, 1941.



Passing a burning BT-7, these S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251) carried three frames on either side to mount the 28 cm H.E. or the 32 cm jellied gasoline rocket.

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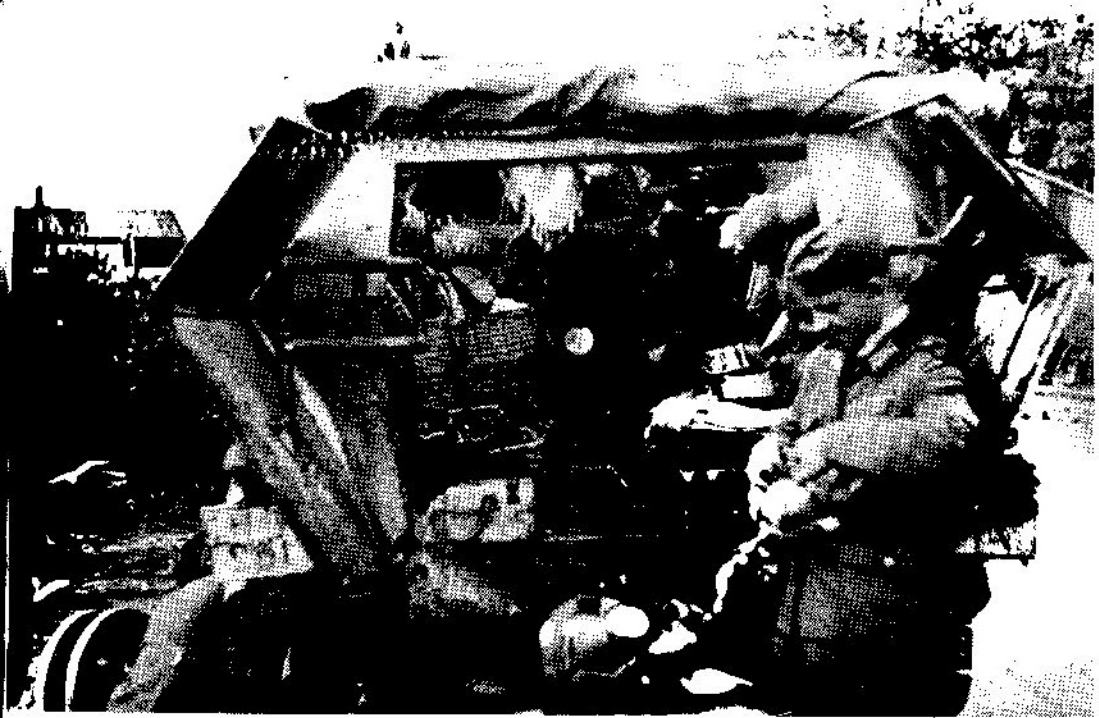
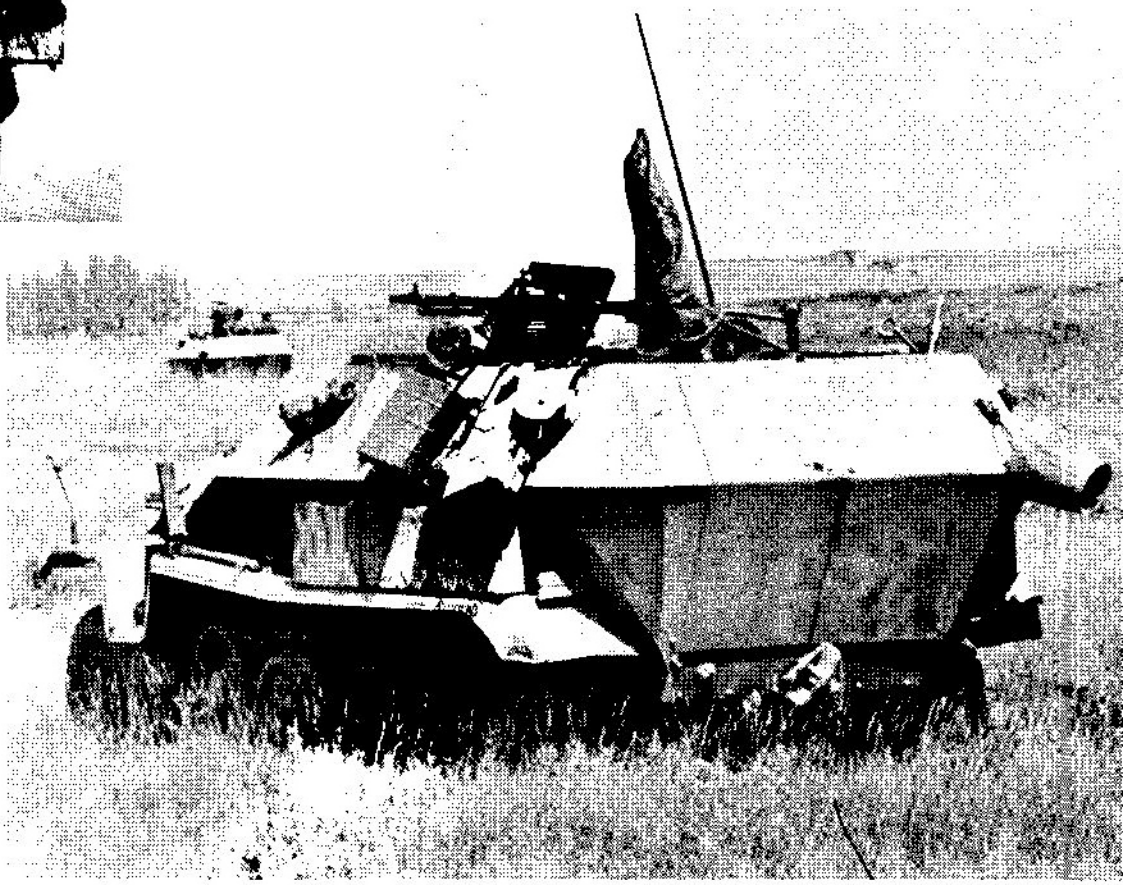


The large double doors in the rear of the S.P.W. provided easy accessibility for the 10 man infantry squad, driver and commander.

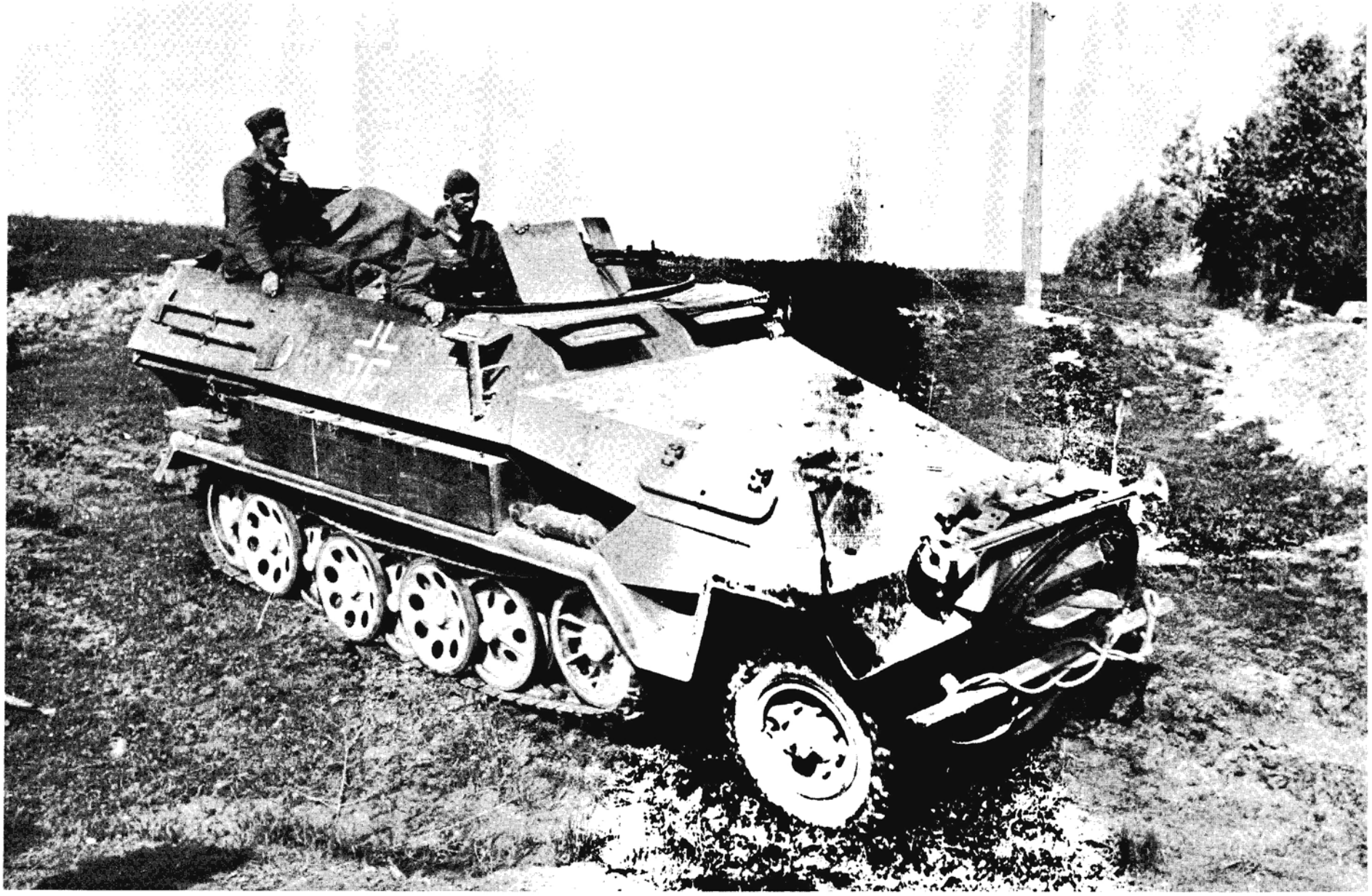


Rear view of an A.P.C. with various equipment attached to the outside armor plates.

Resting on a jerry water can marked by a white cross, a soldier is manning a MG 34 on an anti-aircraft tripod, while his comrades take cover from the hot noon sun under protective canvas.

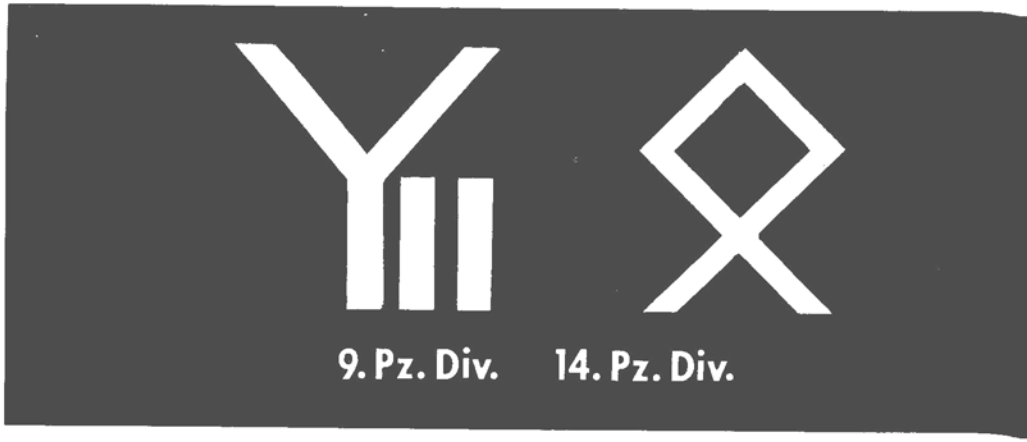
Leading the attack, a m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/3) is followed by a Volkswagen "Kübel" and "Kradschützen" infantry motorcycle. Africa, June, 1942, during the battle of Tobruk.

Mittler Krankenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz.251/8). This vehicle came in two versions and with a crew of two men, served as an armored ambulance. Four stretchers could be placed in the compartment or up to ten lightly wounded men could be evacuated.



The cross-country-ability of the German A.P.C. was adequate but unsatisfactory in rough and muddy terrain. Compared with the U.S. Car, Half Track M3, the m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251) was not as robust and rather underpowered, but had better armor protection.

S.P.W. Ausf. C (Sd.Kfz.250/1) of the 14. Panzer Division.



The Firm of Büssing – NAG started to equip the m.S.P.W. with a 7,5 cm KwK L/24 originally designed for the Pz.Kpfw. IV. One hundred and fifty Sd.Kfz.251/9 were ordered, and delivery began in June 1942. With a crew of three, these vehicles served as support vehicles and carried 32 rounds of ammunition.

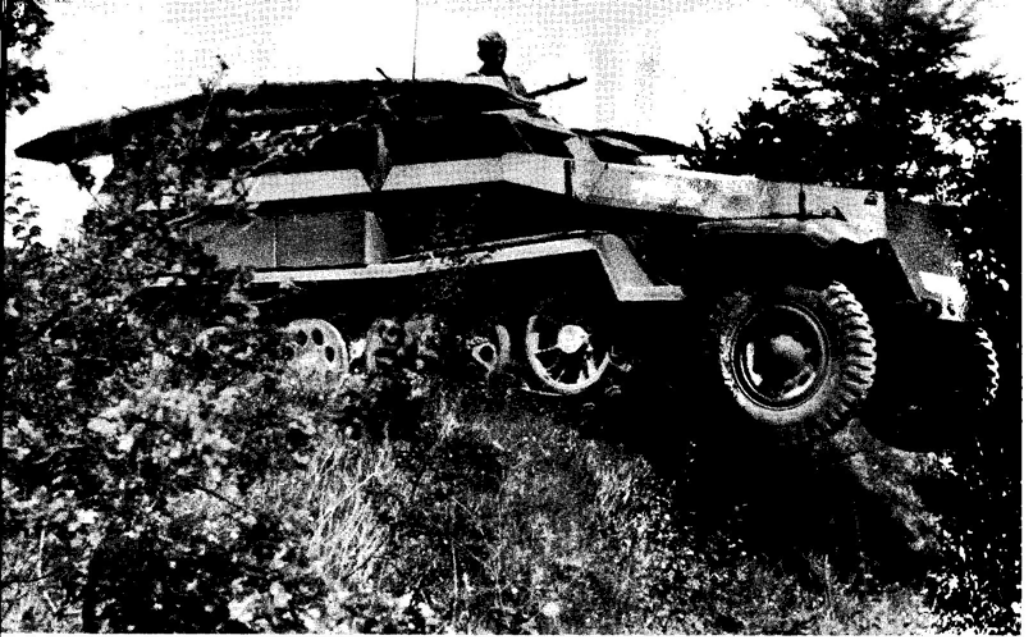
Schützenpanzerwagen of the Panzergruppe von Kleist (tank group), 9. Panzer Division.

Ideal S.P.W. terrain. Panzer II, le.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/3) m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/10) and m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/1) squad vehicle, during the early days of the War in the East.

Vehicle 223 of the 24. Panzer Division with an interesting gray and mud-camouflage. A 12 liters (12½ quarts) food container, 20 liters (5 gallon) jerry-can, 600 round MG ammunition box, steel helmet and a 10 liters (2½ gallon) water pail are all attached to to the outer plates. An invitation for the model builder to make his S.P.W. look realistic.

A disabled S.P.W. is towed off the battlefield by a tank. *Note the spare track links on top of the front fender.*

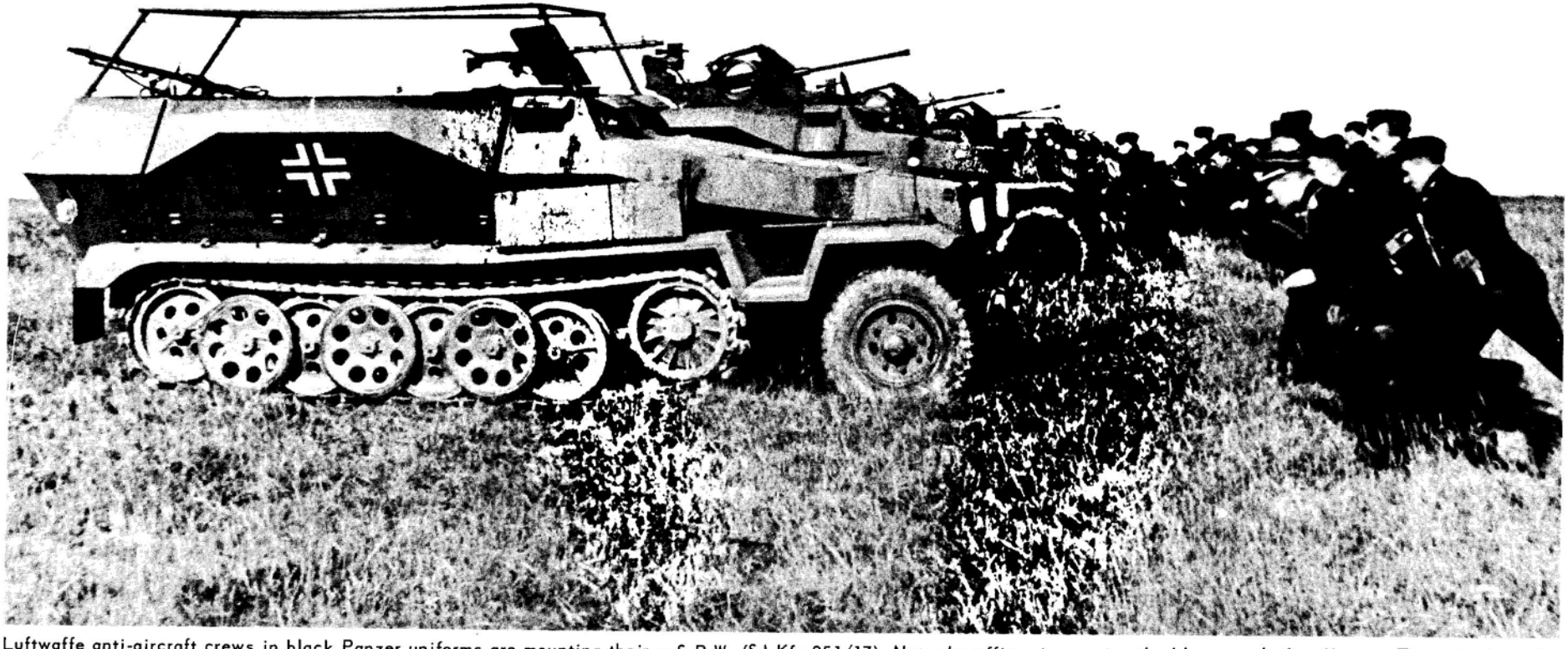
A Waffen-SS "Panzergrenadier" unit in support of Panzer III prepares for a counter-attack in Russia, 1943. The vehicle at the right is a Panzer III Ausf. K command vehicle.



The Pionier S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/7), mounting bridging equipment, appeared in two versions. A crew of eight men and two MG 34, two sub-machine guns plus assorted engineering equipment was carried.

The "Sturmbrücken" (assault bridge) previously laid by the engineers, enabled tanks to cross smaller ditches and rivers during the attack.

The crew of this S.P.W., wearing the SP. infantry uniforms, is preparing a 2,8 cm schwere Panzerbüchse 41 (airborne version).

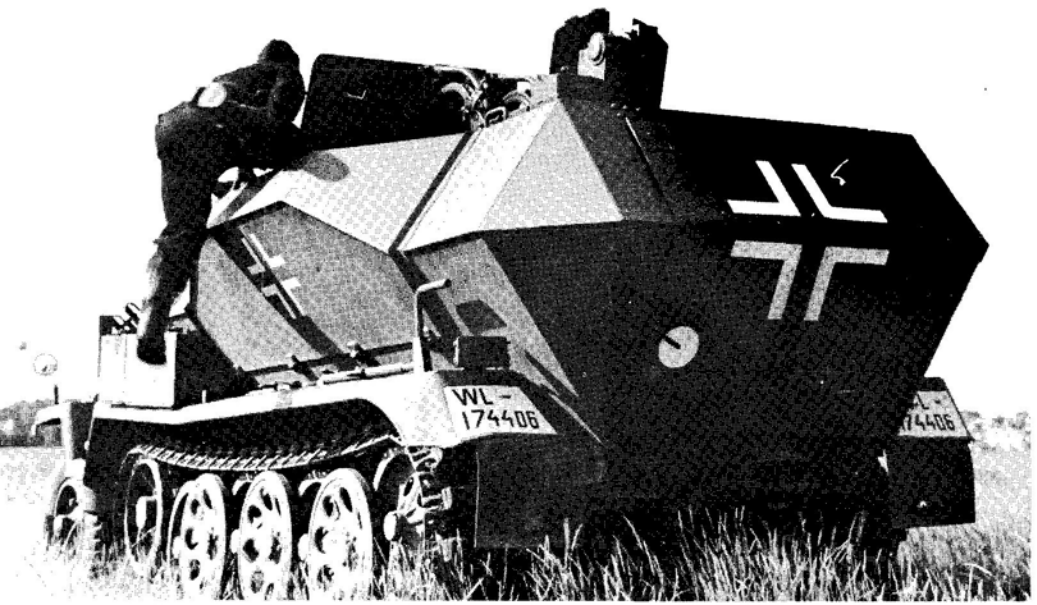


Luftwaffe anti-aircraft crews in black Panzer uniforms are mounting their m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/17). *Note the officer is wearing the blue-gray Luftwaffe cap. The vehicle in the foreground is a command version armed with two MG 34.*

S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/17) equipped with a 2 cm Flak 38 (anti-aircraft gun). These vehicles were designed to Luftwaffe specifications. *Note the rifle racks outside the vehicle wall.*

Left Below:

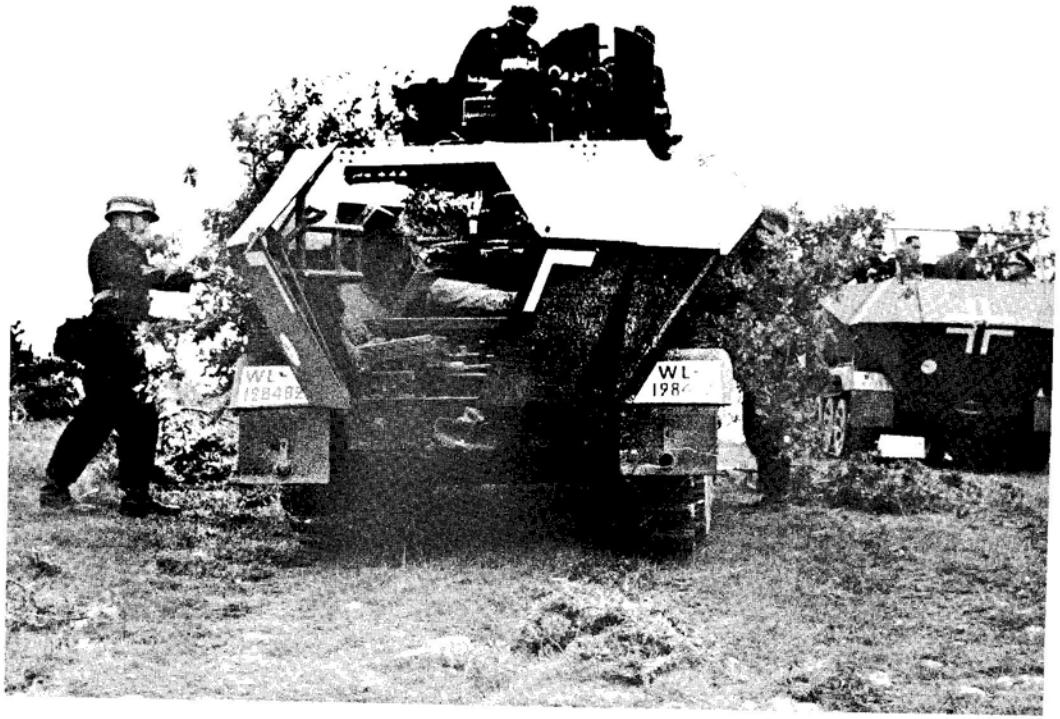
The side walls could be folded down during action giving the gun a 360° traverse. Elevation was -12° to +90°, rate of fire (practical) 220 r.p.m. effective, ceiling 3500 feet.

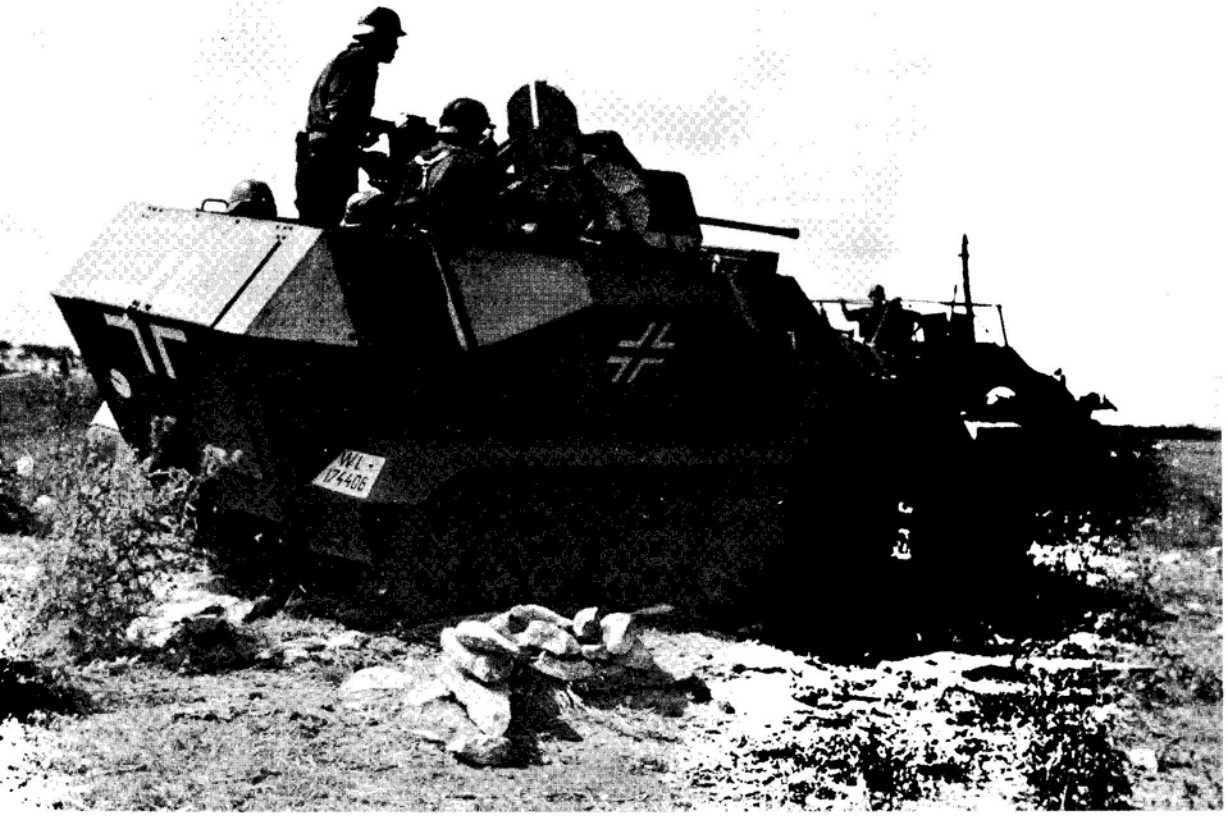


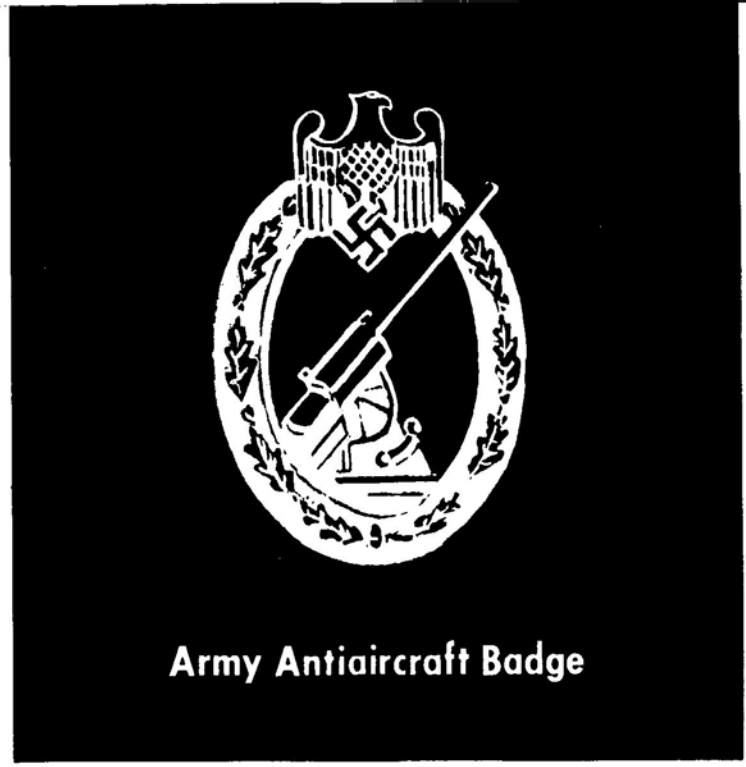
Repairing the "Schachtellaufwerk" consisting of six pairs of staggered rubber tired, pressed steel road wheels. The wheels were suspended by torsion bars, one to each wheel.

A Luftwaffe Hauptmann (Captain) in black Panzeruniform. The Captain is decorated with the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross, Iron Cross 2nd and 1st Class, Wound Badge (black) and the General Assault Badge. The officer is partly hidden behind the 7 mm gun shield and the "Scherenfernrohr".

The open double door allowing a view into the interior of the S.P.W. which also seems to be painted dark gray.







Army Antiaircraft Badge

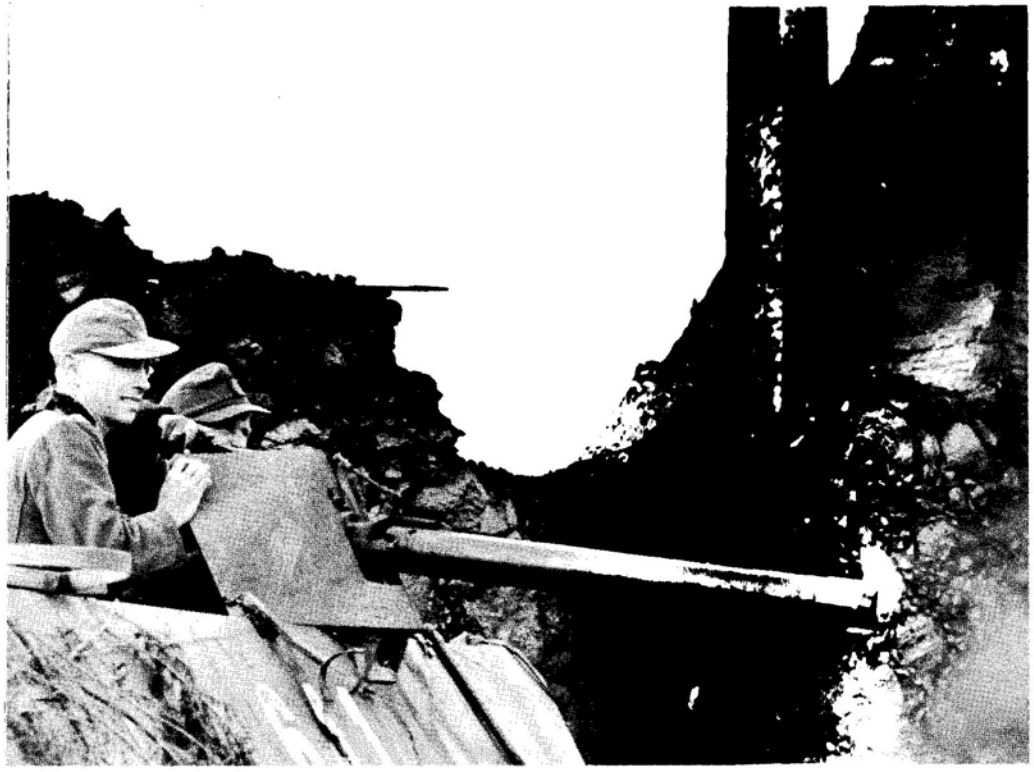
The m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/17) 2 cm Flak 38 in battle station. Six hundred rounds of 2 cm ammunition could be carried in this vehicle. It is obvious that ammunition supply always had to be close at hand, considering the rate of fire of the Flak was 480 r.p.m. (practical 220 r.p.m.).

Introduced in 1943, the final version of the m.S.P.W. Series. The Ausführung D appeared with a considerably modified super-structure to adapt to the most advanced mass production methods.

Stu.G.III and m.S.P.W. Ausf. D, moving through a typical Russian village. *Note the various uniforms worn by the crews.*

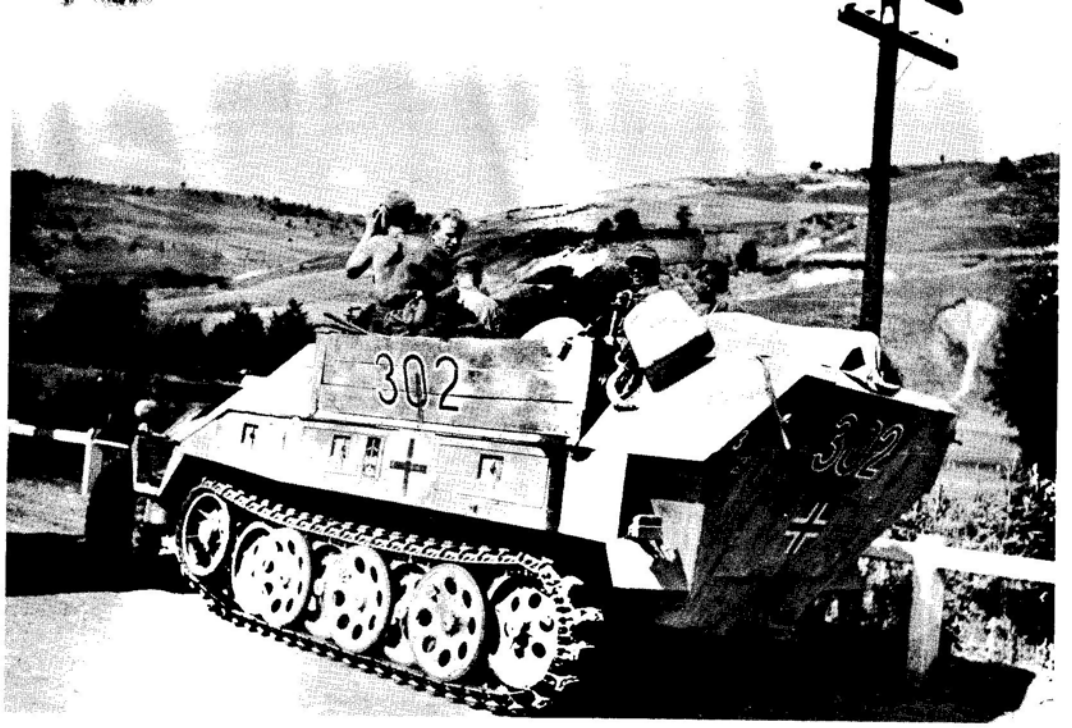
In contrast with the advanced design of the 9t m.S.P.W., the German Army utilized horses, mainly on the Eastern Front, up to the end of the War. The troops appear to be well equipped with camouflage parkas.

The 3,7 cm anti-tank gun was replaced by the 7,5 cm L/24 KwK. The m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/9) employed in the last two years of the war, added much needed fire-power to the Panzergrenadier outfits.



One of two hand operated 14 mm flamethrowers of the m.S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.251/16) Flammpanzer.

Vehicle No. 644 in action. In addition to the two 14 mm flamethrowers, a 7 mm hand operated flamethrower plus two sub-machine guns, made up the armament of this potent fighting vehicle.



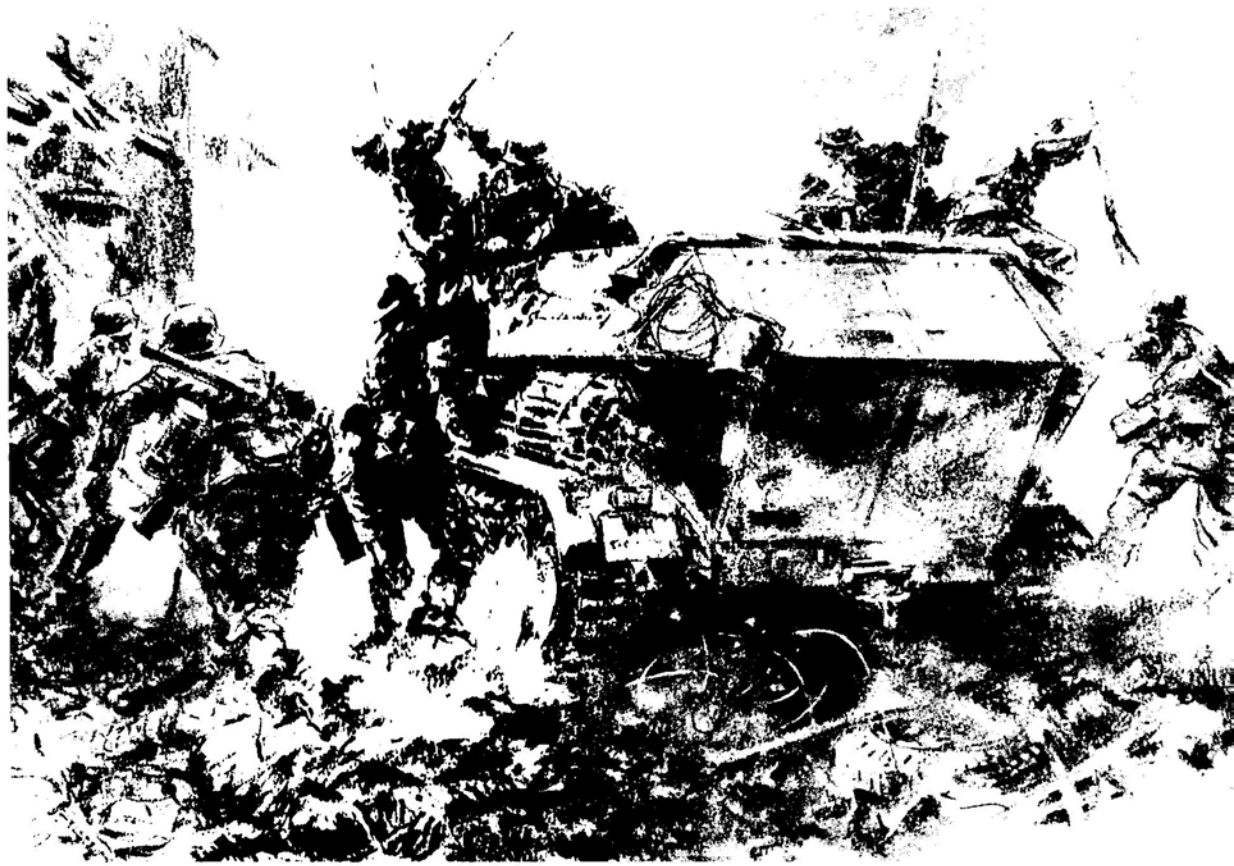
The Pionier-Gerätewagen (engineer vehicle) of the Panzer-Pionier 92, carried a crew of eight, two MG 42 and various engineering equipment. This vehicle is the subject of the color drawing in this Volume.

A camouflaged m.S.P.W. Ausf. D is moving past the burned out remains of its Allied counterpart, a M3 Half Track, during the Battle of France, June 1944.

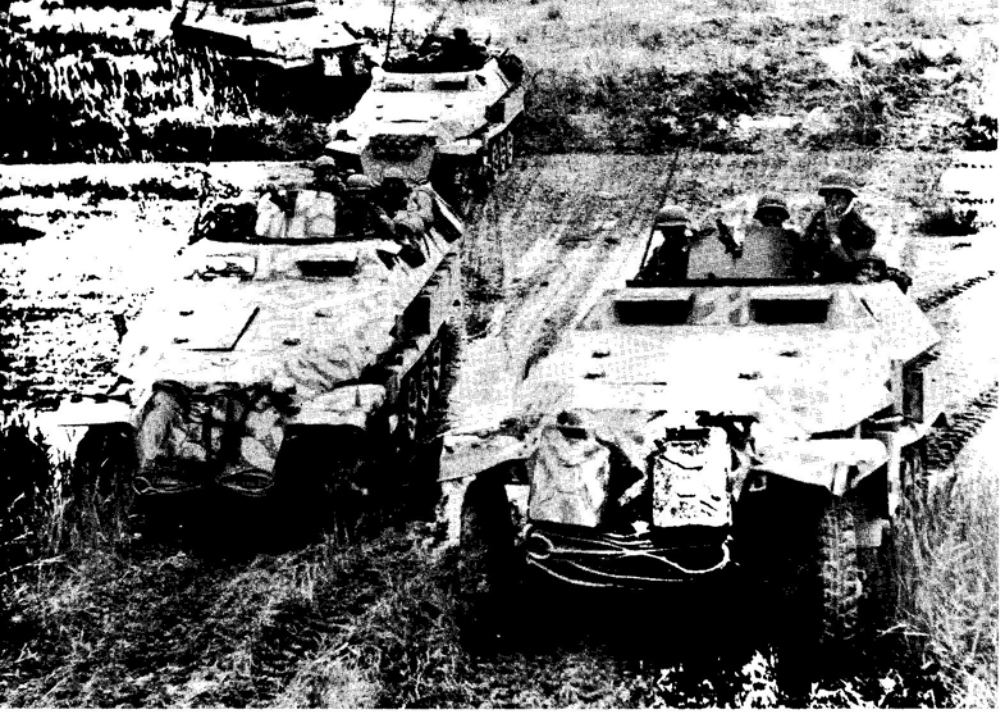
Rumanian troops also received some of the new m.S.P.W. Ausf. D.

Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt and high ranking Wehrmachts - and SS - officers are inspecting shock-troops of the 6th SS Panzer Army. The camouflage of this m.S.P.W. Ausf. D consists of dark gray with sand and brown-green lines and mottle sprayed on top.

SCHÜTZENPANZER in ACTION on the EASTERN FRONT



A German Wartime painting vividly depicts Panzergrenadiers in Action.



Schützenpanzerwagen Ausf. C moving into position. This picture clearly indicates the irregularity of the camouflage patterns employed by the Germans.
For the modeler I suggest: The vehicle to the left, dark gray with sand colored spots and lines, the S.P.W. to the right, dark gray and sand crisscross pattern.

An interesting view of the S.P.W. sporting various accessories, jerry cans, mortar ammunition box and water bucket.

The same vehicle after encountering the enemy. The crew is now wearing their steel helmets, the ammunition box is removed and the MG 34 are readied for action.

Panzer IV G and an S.P.W. Ausf. C assembling for a combined assault.

The sky is blackened by burning oil tanks. Dismounted "Panzergrenadiere" manning a MG 34 position. The "Schütze" at the right is holding his Luger.

13. Panzer Division

Closely followed by a "leichter Schützenpanzerwagen" (Sd.Kfz.250/3), S.P.W.'s are filing into the gap previously created by the Panzers.

Pockets of enemy resistance left by the advancing tanks are cleared by dismounted Infantry, while a 3,7 cm Pak is giving fire cover.

Close Combat Badge

Riflemen are leaving the protection of their armored vehicle to search the area fo enemy troops.

The enemy has been contacted, and the positions located.

With bayonets at ready, the fox holes are charged.

. . . . . Handgrenades are thrown into the dugouts.

While a MG 34 gunner pins the defender down under a hail of bullets . . . . . .

The surviving defenders are leaving their well-built bunker.

A m.S.P.W. of the 14. Panzer Division sporting victory marks on the armor plate, probably the combined achievement of the APC company.

After a stiff fight, Soviet prisoners are lead back to the waiting S.P.W.

Leichter Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz. 250) and its Variants

S.P.W. Sonderkraftfahrzeug 250/1.....2 X MG 34 squad vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/2)..... telephone unit
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/3).....radio vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/4).....air-raid vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/5).....reconnaissance vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/6).....ammunition carrier
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/7).....8 cm Mortar carrier
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/8).....7,5 cm KwK 37 L/42
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/9).....armored scout car
2 cm KwK 38 L/55, 1 MG
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/10).....3,7 cm Pak 36
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/11).....s. Panzerbüchse 41
(heavy anti-tank rifle 41)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 250/12).....le. survey section instrument carrier

Mittlerer Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz. 251) and its Variants

S.P.W. Sonderkraftfahrzeug 251/1.....squad vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/2).....8 cm Mortar carrier
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/3).....radio vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/4).....le. 1.G. Zgkw.
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/5).....engineer A.P.C.
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/6).....commander-vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/7) .....engineer-equip ment-vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/8).....ambulance A.P.C.
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/9).....7,5 cm StuK. 37 L/24
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/10).....3,7 cm Pak (anti-tank gun)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/11).....telephone vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/12).....survey vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/13)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/14)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/15)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/16).....flamethrower vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/17).....2 cm Flak (anti-tank gun)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/18).....observation vehicle
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/19)
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/20).."Uhu".....infra-red light sp otter
S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz. 251/21).....2 cm Fla-MG-Drilling 151
(2 cm anti-aircraft gun)

TECHNICAL DATA

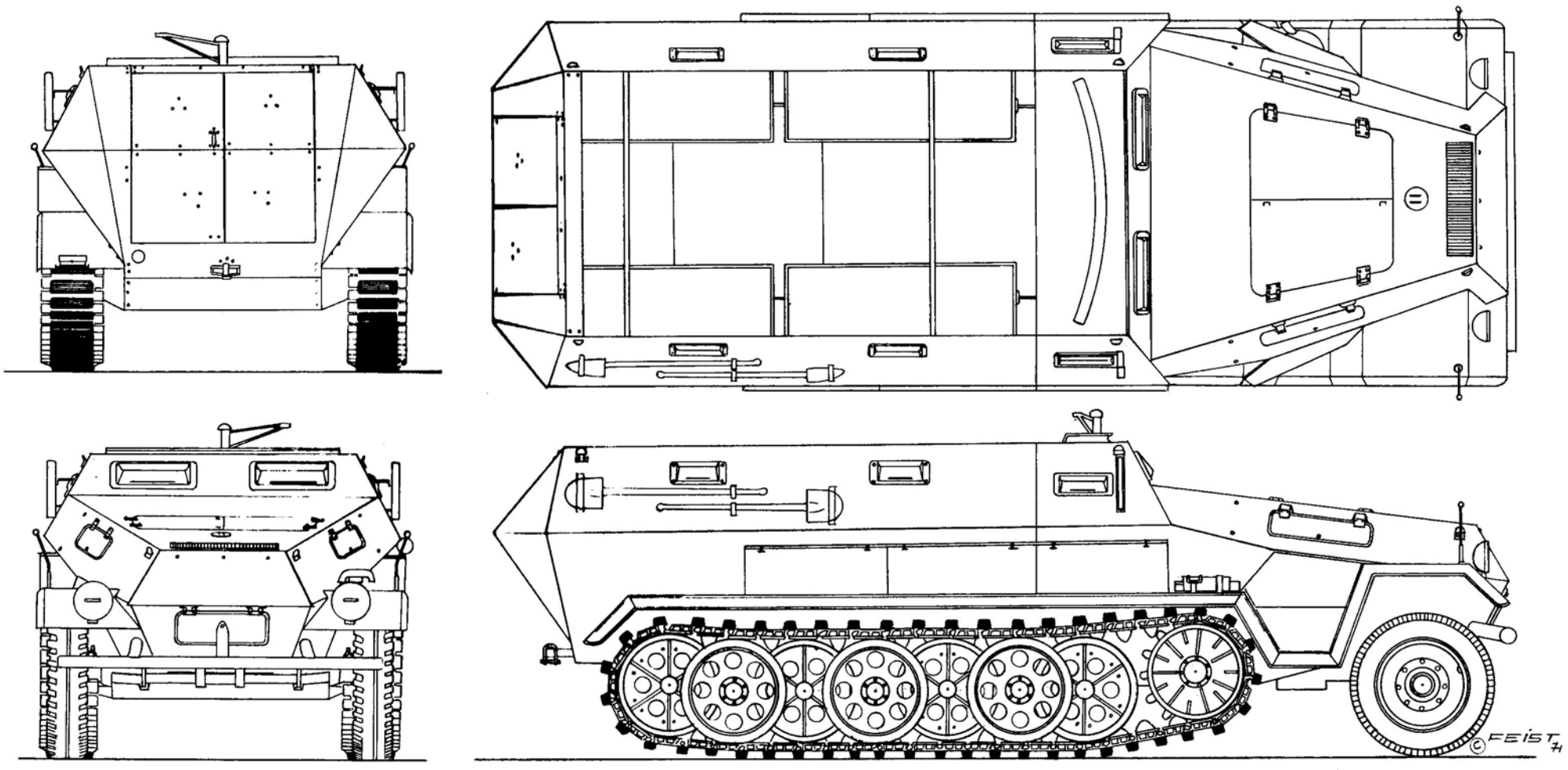
Leichter Schützenpanzerwagen typ D 7 p
(Sd.Kfz. 250/1)
(Light armored-personnel carrier)

Producer	Demag (1940-1944)
Crew	6 men (Halbgruppe)
Armament	1 MG 34, 1 MP, 3 rifles
Armor	Front 12 mm, Side 7 mm, Rear 7 mm, Floor 6 mm
Weight	5,7 t (5,700 kg)
Motor	1 X 6 Cyl. Maybach HL 42 TRKM (water cooled) 4170 mm, 100 PS at 2800 r.p.m.
Speed	Road 65 Km/h.
Fuel Capacity	140 Liter
Fuel Consumption	Road 40 Liter, cross-country 70 Liter/100 Km.
Range	Road 350 Km., cross-country 200 Km.
Dimensions	Length: 456 cm. Height: 198 cm. Width: 195 cm.
Price	RM 20,000 (Approximately $5,000)
Production	Approximately 7,500 vehicles

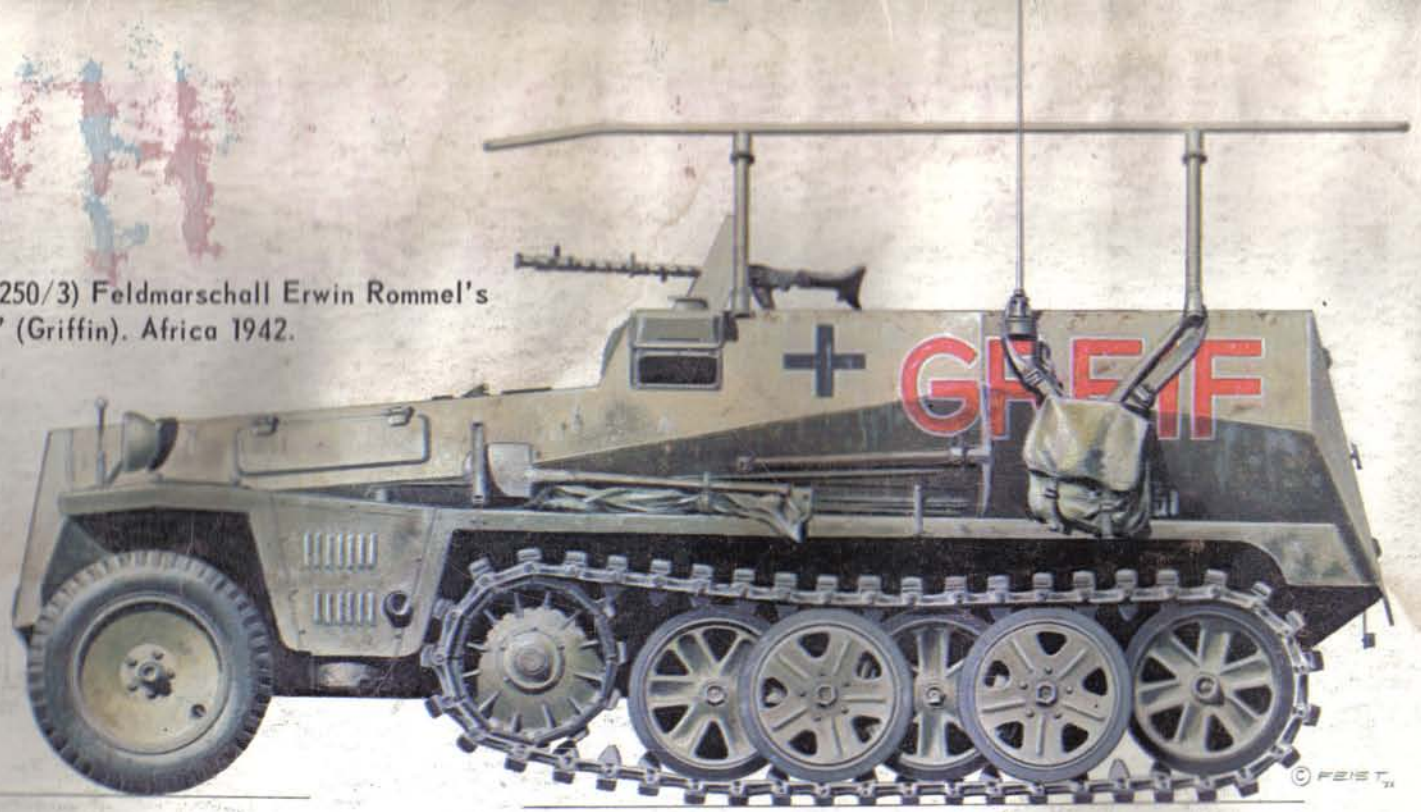
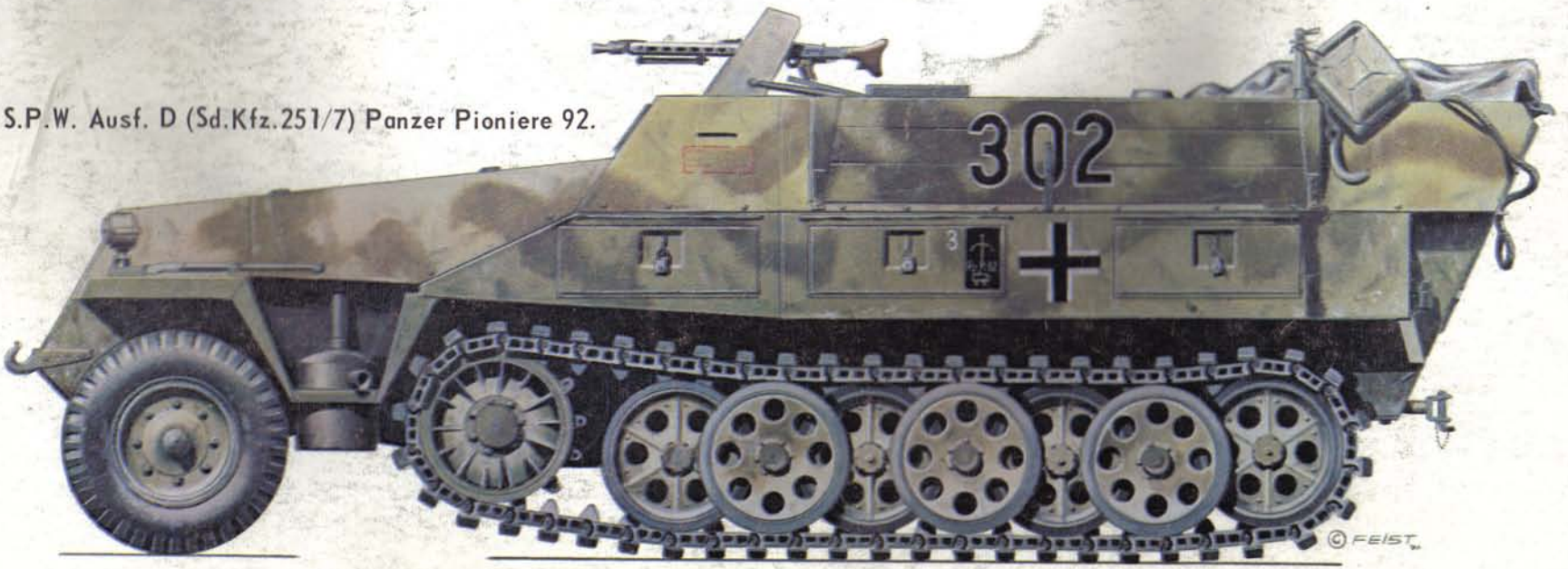
Mittlerer Schützenpanzerwagen typ HL kl 6 p
(Sd.Kfz. 251)
(Medium armored-personnel carrier)

Producer	Borgward, Hanomag
Crew	12 men (Gruppe) driver, platoon leader, 10 riflemen
Armament	2 MG 34/42, 2 MP, 6 rifles
Armor	Front 14.5 mm, Side 8 mm, Rear 8 mm, Floor 6 mm
Weight	8.9 t (8,900 kg)
Motor	1 X 6 Cyl. Maybach HL 42 TUKRM (water cooled) 4171 mm, 100 PS at 2800 r.p.m.
Speed	Road 52 Km/h (33 m.p.h.)
Fuel Capacity	160 Liter
Fuel Consumption	Road 50 Liter, cross-country 85 Liter /100 Km.
Range	Road 320 Km., cross-country 175 Km.
Dimensions	Length: 580 cm Height: 210 cm Width: 210 cm
Price	RM 23,000
Production	Approximately 16,000 vehicles of all types

Mittlerer Schützenpanzerwagen (Sd.Kfz. 251)



Leichter S.P.W. (Sd.Kfz.250/3) Feldmarschall Erwin Rommel's Befehls - S.P.W. "Greif" (Griffin). Africa 1942.



Mittlerer S.P.W. Ausf. D (Sd.Kfz.251/7) Panzer Pioniere 92.